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THE

GRAVE OF THE LAST SAXON;

OR,

THE LEGEND OF THE CURFEW.

LONDON.
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THE

GRAVE OF THE LAST SAXON;

OR,

THE LEGEND OF THE CURFEW.

A POEM.

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BY THE REV. W. L. BOWLES,

AUTHOR OF LETTERS TO LORD BYRON,
' POEMS, ETC.'

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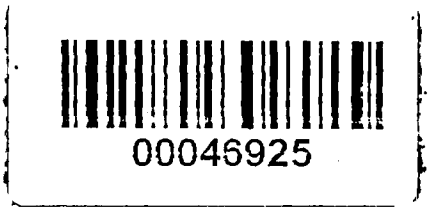
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TO

RICHARD HEBER, ESQ.,

M. P. FOR THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD,

THIS POEM IS DEDICATED,

IN TOKEN OF PUBLIC AND PRIVATE RESPECT,

BY HIS OBEDIENT SERVANT.

W. L. BOWLES.

INTRODUCTION.

The circumstance of the late critical controversy with Lord Byron having recalled my attention to a poem, sketched some years ago, on a subject of national history, I have been induced to revise and correct, and now venture to offer it to the public.

The subject, though taken from an early period of our history, is, as far as relates to the Grave of Harold, purely imaginary, as are all the characters, except those of the Conqueror, and of Edgar Atheling. History, I think, justifies me in representing William as acting constantly under strong religious impressions. A few circumstances in his life will clearly show this. When Harold was with him in Nor-

mandy, he took an oath of him on *two* altars, within which were concealed miraculous relics* His banner was sent from Rome, consecrated by the Pope, for the especial purpose of the invasion of England. Without adverting to the night spent in prayer before the battle of Hastings, was not this impression more decidedly shown when he pitched his tent among the dead on that night, and vowed to build an abbey on the spot? The event of the battle was so much against all human probability, that his undertaking it, at the place and time, can only be reconciled by supposing he acted under some extraordinary impression.

When the battle was gained, he knew not on what course to determine: instead of marching to London, he retired towards Dover. When he was met by the Kentish men, with green boughs, the quaint historian says, "He was *daunted*." These and many other incidental circumstances may occur to the reader.

* See the picture in Stodhard's travels.

In representing him, therefore, as under the control of superstitious impressions, I trust I have not transgressed, at least, poetical *verisimilitude*. An earthquake actually happened about the period at which the poem commences, followed by storms and inundations. Of these facts I have availed myself.

I fear the poem will be thought less interesting, from having nothing of *Love* in it, except, in accordance with the received ideas of the gentleness of Atheling's character, I have made him not insensible to one of my imaginary females, and have, therefore, to mark his character, made him advert to the pastoral scenes of Scotland, where he had been a resident. There is a similarity between my "Monk," and "The Missionary," but their offices and the scenes are entirely different, and some degree of similarity was unavoidable in characters of the same description.

Filial affection, love of our country, bravery,

sternness, (inflexible, except under religious fears,) the loftier feelings of a desolate female, under want and affliction, with something of the wild prophetical cast; religious submission, and deep acquiescence in the will of God; these passions are brought into action, round one centre, if I may use the word, "The GRAVE OF THE LAST SAXON."

That Harold's sons landed with a large fleet from Denmark, were joined by an immense confederate army, in the third year of William's reign, is a well-known historical fact. That York was taken by the confederate army, and that all the Normans, except Sir William Malet, and his family, were killed, is also matter of record. (*See Drake's History of York, and Turner's History of England.*) That afterwards (the blow against William failing), the whole country, from the Humber to Tyne, from the east to the west, was depopulated by sword and famine, are facts also found in all historians.

Some slight anachronisms may, I hope, be pardoned; if anachronisms they are, such as the year in which the Tower was built, &c.

The plan will be found, I trust, simple and coherent, the characters sufficiently marked and contrasted, and the whole, conducive, however deficient, in other respects, to the excitement of virtuous sympathy, and subservient to that, which alone can give dignity to poetry, the cause of moral and religious truth.

ERRATA.

Page 35, line 16.

To

" Mingled with things forgotten,"

Add

" Until then,

" And then remember'd freshly."

Page 37, line 9.

For

" This,

" Your darling, for his safety, lo!"

Read

" Him,

" Whom e'ry eye must view with tenderness.

" Oh! trust me; for his safety, lo! I pledge."

Page 46, line last, *dele* " rose."

75, 6, *dele* " midnight."

86, 2, *for* " warm," *read* " warn."

The Grave of the last Saxon;

OR,

THE LEGEND OF THE CURFEW.

The Grave of the last Saxon.

INTRODUCTORY CANTO.

Subject—Grave and Children of Harold—Confederate Army of Danes, Scots, and English arrived in the Humber the third year of the Conqueror, and marching to York.

"KNOW ye THE LAND where the bright orange glows?"
Oh! rather know ye not THE LAND, belov'd
Of Liberty, where your brave fathers bled?
THE LAND of the white cliffs, where ev'ry cot
Whose smoke goes up in the clear morning sky,
On the green hamlet's edge, stands as secure
As the proud Norman castle's banner'd keep?
Oh! shall the poet paint a land of slaves,
(Albeit, that the richest colours warm
His tablet, glowing from the master's hand,)
And THEE forget, HIS COUNTRY—thee, HIS HOME?

Fair Italy! thy hills and olive-groves,
A lovelier light empurples—or when Morn,
Streams o'er the cloudless van of Apennine,
Or more majestic Eve, on the wide scene,
Of columns, temples, arcs, and aqueducts,
Sits, like reposing Glory, and collects
Her richest radiance at that parting hour;
While distant domes, touch'd by her hand, shine out
More solemnly, 'mid the gray monuments,
That strew th' illustrious plain; yet say, can these,
E'en when their pomp is proudest, and the sun,
Sinks o'er the ruins of Immortal Rome,
A holy interest wake, intense as that,
Which visits his full heart, who, sever'd long,
And home returning, sees once more the light
Shine on the land where his forefathers sleep;
Sees its white cliffs at distance, and exclaims,
"There I was born, and there my bones shall rest?"

Then, oh! ye bright pavilions of the East,
Ye blue Italian skies, and summer-seas,

By marble cliffs high-bounded, throwing far
A gray illumination through the haze
Of orient morning; ye, Etruscan shades,
Where Pan's own pipes o'er Valombrosa wave;
Scenes, where old Tiber, for the mighty dead
As mourning, heavily rolls; or Anio
Flings its white foam; or lucid Arno steals
On gently through the plains of Tuscany;
Be ye th' impassion'd themes of other song.
Nor mine, thou wond'rous WESTERN WORLD, to call
The thunder of thy cataracts, or paint
The mountains and the vast volcano-range
Of Cordilleras, high above the stir
Of human things, lifting to middle air
Their snows in everlasting solitude,
Upon whose nether crags the vulture, lord
Of summits inaccessible, looks down,
Unhearing, when the thunder dies below!
Nor, midst th' irriguous valleys of the South,
Where Chili spreads her green lap to the sea,

Now pause I to admire the bright blue bird,
Brightest and least of all its kind, that spins
Its twinkling flight, still humming o'er the flow'rs,
Like a gem of flitting light!

To these adieu!

Yet ere thy melodies, my harp, are mute
For ever, whilst the stealing day goes out
With slow-declining pace, I would essay
One patriot theme, one ancient British song:
So might I fondly dream, when the cold turf
Was heap'd above my head, and carping tongues
Were ceased, some tones, Old England, thy green hills
Might then remember———

Time has reft the shrine,
Where the last Saxon, canonized, lay,
And every trace has vanish'd, like the light
That from the high-arch'd eastern window fell,
With broken sunshine, on his marble tomb-

So have they pass'd; and silent are the choirs
That to his spirit sung eternal rest;
And scatter'd are his bones who raised those walls.
Where, from the field of blood slowly convey'd,
His mangled corse, with torch and orison,
Before the altar, and in holy earth,
Was laid! Yet oft I muse upon the theme,
And now, whilst solemn the slow curfew tolls,
Years and dim centuries seem to unfold
Their shroud, as at the summons; and I think
How sad that sound on ev'ry English heart
Smote, when along those dark'ning vales, where Lea [1]
Beneath the woods of Waltham winds, it broke
First on the silence of the night, far heard
Through the deep forest! PHANTOMS OF THE PAST,
Ye gather round me! VOICES OF THE DEAD,
Ye come by fits! And now I hear, far off,
Faint ELEESONS swell, while to the fane
The long procession, and the pomp of death,
Moves visible; and now one voice is heard

From a vast multitude, "Harold, farewell!
"Farewell, and rest in peace!" That sable car
Bears the LAST SAXON to his grave, (the last
From Hengist, of the long illustrious line
That sway'd the English sceptre!) Hark! a cry!
'Tis from his mother, who, with frantic mien,
Follows the bier! with manly look composed,
Godwin, his eldest-born, and Adela,
Her head declined, her hand upon her brow
Beneath the veil, supported by his arm,
Sorrowing succeed: lo! pensive Edmund there,
Leads Wolfe, the least and youngest, by the hand!—
Brothers and sisters, silent and in tears,
Follow their father to the dust, beneath
Whose eye they grew—Last and alone, behold,
Marcus, [2] subduing the deep sigh, with brow
Of sterner acquiescence—Slowly pace
The sad remains of England's chivalry,
The few whom Hastings' field of carnage spared,
To follow their slain monarch's hearse this night,

Whose corse is borne beneath th' escutcheon'd pall,
To rest in Waltham Abbey. So the train,
(Imagination thus embodying it)
Moves onward to the Abbey's western porch,
Whose windows and retiring aisles reflect
The long funereal lights. Twelve stoled monks,
Each with a torch, and pacing, two and two,
Along the pillar'd nave, with crucifix
Aloft, begin the supplicating chant,
Intoning "Miserere Domine."

Now, the stone-coffins in the earth are laid
Of Harold, and of Leofrine, and Girth, (3)
Brave brethren slain in one disastrous day.
And hark! again the monks and choristers
Sing, pacing round the grave-stone, "REQUIEM
"ETERNAM DONA IIS."—TO HIS GRAVE,
So was King Harold borne, within those walls
His bounty raised: his children knelt and wept,
Then slow departed, never in this world,

Perhaps, to meet again. But who is she,
Her dark hair streaming on her brow, her eye
Wild, and her breast deep-heaving? She beheld
At distance the due rites, nor wept, nor spake,
And now is gone.

Alas! from that sad hour,
By many fates, all who that hour had met,
Were scatter'd. Godwin, Edmund, Adela,
Exiles in Denmark, there a refuge found
From England's stormy fortunes. Three long years
Have pass'd; again they tread their native land.-
The Danish armament beneath the SATURN [4]
Is anchor'd—Twenty thousand men at arms
Follow huge Waltheof, on his barbed steed,
His battle-axe hung at the saddle-bow;—
Morcar and Edwin, English earls, are there,
With red-cross banner, and ten thousand men
From Ely and Northumberland: they raise
The death-song of defiance, and advance
With bows of steel. From Scotland's mountain-glens,

From sky-blue lochs, and the wild highland heaths,
From Lothian villages, along the banks
Of Forth, King Malcolm leads his clansmen bold,
And, dauntless as romantic, bids unfurl
The banner of St. Andrew! by his side
Mild Edgar Atheling, a stripling boy,
His brother, heir to England's throne, appears,
The dawn of youth on his fresh cheek! and lo!
The broad-swords glitter as the tartan'd troops
March to the pibroch's sound. The Danish trump
Brays, like a gong, heard to the holts and towns
Of Lincolnshire.
With crests and shields the same,
A lion frowning on each helmet's cone,
Like the two brothers famed in ancient song, (5)
Godwin and Edmund, sons of Harold, lead
From Scandinavia and the Baltic isles
The impatient Northmen to th' embattled host
On Humber's side—The standards wave in air,
Drums roll, and glittering columns file, and arms

Flash to the morn, and banner'd trumpets bray,
Heralds, or armorers, from tent to tent
Are hurrying—crests, and spears, and steel-bows gleam,
Far as the eye can reach—barb'd horses neigh—
Their mailed riders wield the battle-axe,
Or draw the steel-bows with a clang—and hark!
From the vast moving host is heard one shout,
"CONQUEST or DEATH!"—as now the sun ascends,
And on the bastion'd walls of Ravenspur
Flings its first beam—one mighty shout is heard,
"PERISH THE NORMAN! SOLDIERS, ON!—TO YORK!"

The Grave of the last Saxon.

CANTO THE FIRST.

Castle of Ravenspur, on the Humber—Daughter of Harold—Ailric, the monk.

"Let us go up to the west turret's top,"
Adela cried; "let us go up—the night
"Is still, and to the east great ocean's hum
"Is scarcely heard. If but a wand'ring step,
"Or distant shout, or dip of hast'ning oar,
"Or tramp of steed, or far-off trumpet, break
"The hush'd horizon, we can catch the sound,
"When breathless expectation watches there."

Upon the platform of the highest tow'r
Of Ravenspur, beneath the lonely lamp,

At midnight, leaning o'er the battlement,
The daughter of slain Harold, Adela,
And a gray monk who never left her side,
Watch'd: for this night or death or victory
The Saxon standard waits——
Hark! 'twas a shout,
And sounds at distance as of marching men!
No! all is silent, save the tide, that rakes,
At times, the beach, or breaks beneath the cliff.
Listen! was it the fall of hast'ning oars?
No! all is hush'd! "Oh! when will they return?"
Adela sigh'd; for three long nights had pass'd,
Since her brave brothers left these bastion'd walls,
And march'd, with the confederate host, to York.
"They come not: Have they perish'd?" So dark thoughts
Arose, and then she rais'd her look to Heav'n,
And clasp'd the cross, and pray'd more fervently.
Her lifted eye in the pale lamp-light shone,
Touch'd with a tear; soft airs of ocean blew
Her long light hair, whilst audibly she cried,

"Preserve them, blessed Mary! oh! preserve
"My brothers." As she pray'd, one pale small star,
A still and lonely star, through the black night
Look'd out, like Hope!—Instant, a trumpet rung,
And voices rose, and hurrying lights appear'd;
Now louder shouts along the platform peal—
"Oh! they are Normans!" she exclaim'd, and grasp'd
The old man's hand, and said, "yet we will die
"As HAROLD'S DAUGHTER;" and, with mien and voice,
Firm and unfaltering, kiss'd the crucifix.
They knelt together, and the old man spoke:
"All here is toil and tempest—we shall go,
"Daughter of Harold, where the weary rest."
Oh! holy Mary, 'tis the clank of steel
Up the stone stairs! and, lo! beneath the lamp,
In arms, the beaver of his helmet raised,
Some light hairs straying on his ruddy cheek,
With breath hastily drawn, and cheering smile,
Young ATHELING. "THE SAXON BANNER WAVES"—
"Oh! are my brothers safe?" cried Adela,

" Speak! speak! Oh! tell me, do my brothers live?"
Atheling answer'd, " They will soon appear—
" My post was on the eastern hills—a scout
" Came breathless, sent from Edmund, and I hied,
" With a small company, and horses fleet,
" At his command, to thee. He bade me say,
" Even now, upon the citadel of York,
" Above the bursting fires, and rolling smoke,
" THE SAXON BANNER WAVES"——
" I thank thee, Lord!
" My brothers live!" cried Adela, and knelt
Upon the platform, with uplifted hands,
And look to Heaven—then rising with a smile,
Said, " We have watch'd, I and this old man here,
" Hour after hour, through the long lingering night,
" And now 'tis almost morning: I will stay
" Till I have heard my brother's distant horn
" From the west-woods;—but YOU are weary, youth?"
" Oh, no! I will keep watch with you till dawn—
" To me most soothing is an hour like this!

" And who that saw, as now, the morning stars
" Begin to pale, and the gray twilight steal
" So calmly on the seas, and wide hush'd world,
" Could deem there was a sound of misery
" On earth? nay, who could hear thy gentle voice,
" Fair maid, and think there was a voice of hate
" Or strife beneath the stillness of that cope
" Above us? Oh! I hate the noise of arms—
" Here will I watch with you"—Then, after pause,
" Poor ENGLAND is not what it once has been;
" And strange are both our fortunes."

" ATHELING,"

(ADELA answer'd) " early piety
" Hath disciplin'd my heart to ev'ry change.
" How didst thou pass in safety from this land
" Of slavery and sorrow?"

He replied—

" When darker jealousy and lowering hate
" Sat on the brow of WILLIAM, England mourn'd,
" And one dark spirit of conspiracy

" Mutter'd its curses through the land. 'Twas then,
" With fiercer glare, the lion's eye was turn'd
" On me—My sisters and myself embark'd—
" The wide world was before us—we embark'd,
" With some few faithful friends, and from the sea
" Gazed tearful, for a moment, on the shores
" We left for ever—(so it then appear'd).
" Poor Margaret hid her face; but the fresh wind
" Swell'd the full mainsail, and the lessening land,
" The tow'rs, the spires, the villages, the smoke,
" Were seen no more.

" When now at sea, the winds
" Blew adverse, for to HOLLAND was our course—
" More fearful rose the storm—the east-wind sung
" Louder, till wreck'd upon the shores of Forth
" Our vessel lay—Here, friendless, we implored
" A short sojourn and succour—SCOTLAND'S king
" Then sat in DUMFERMLINE—he heard the tale
" Of our distress—he flew himself to save—
" But when he saw my sister Margaret,

" Young, innocent, and beautiful in tears,
" His heart was mov'd.
" 'Oh! welcome here,' he cried:
" 'Tis Heaven hath led you—Lady, look on me—
" If such a flower he cast to the bleak winds,
" 'Twere meet I took and wore it next my heart.'—
" Judg'd he not well, fair maid?
" Thou know'st the rest—
" Compassion nurtur'd love, and Margaret
" (Such are the events of ruling Providence)
" Is now all Scotland's queen!
" To join the bands
" Of warriors, in one cause assembled here,
" King Malcolm left his land of hills—his arm
" Might make the CONQUEROR tremble on his throne!
" E'en should we fail, my sister Margaret
" Would love and honour you; and I might hope,
" (Oh! might I?) on the banks of Tay, or Tweed,
" With thee to wander, (where no curfew sounds,)
" And mark the summer-sun, beyond the hills,

" Sink in its glory, and then, hand in hand,
" Wind through the woods, and——"
Adela replied,
With smile complacent. " Listen—I will be
" (So to beguile the creeping hours of time)
" A tale-teller.—Two years we held sojourn
" In Denmark—two long weary years, and sigh'd,
" When, looking on the southern deep, we thought
" Of our poor country—' Give me men and ships!'
" Godwin still cried—' Oh! give me men and ships!'—
" The king commanded, and his armament—
" (A mightier never stemm'd the Baltic deep,
" Sent forth by sea-kings of the north, or bent
" On hardier enterprise: for NOT some isle
" Of the lone Orcades was now the prize,
" But ENGLAND'S throne.)
" —His mighty armament
" Now left the shores of Denmark. Our brave ships
" Burst through the Baltic straits, how gloriously!
" I heard the trumpets ring; I saw the sails

" Of nigh three hundred war-ships, the dim verge
" Of the remote horizon's skiey track
" Bestudding, here and there, like gems of light
" Dropt from the radiance of the morning sun
" On the gray waste of waters—So our ships
" Swept o'er the billows of the north, and steer'd
" Right on to ENGLAND.

" Foremost of the fleet
" Our gallant vessel rode—around the mast
" Emblazon'd shields were rang'd—and plumed crests
" Shook as the north-east rose—Upon the prow,
" More ardent, Godwin, my brave brother, stood,
" And milder Edmund, on whose mailed arm
" I hung, when the white waves before us swell'd,
" And parted.—The broad banner, in full length,
" Stream'd out its folds, on which the Saxon horse
" Ramp'd, as impatient on the land to leap,
" To which the winds still bore it bravely on;
" Whilst the red cross, on the front banner, shone,
" The hoar deep crimsoning.

" Winds, bear us on—

" Bear us as cheerly, till white Albion's cliffs
" Resound to our triumphant shouts; till there,
" On his own Tow'r, that frowns above the Thames,
" Ev'n there we plant these BANNERS and this CROSS,
" And stamp the CONQUEROR and his CROWN to dust!—
" They would have kept me on a foreign shore,
" But could I leave my brothers? I with them
" Grew up, with them I left my native land,
" With them all perils have I braved, of sea,
" Or war, all storms of hard adversity:
" Let death betide, I reck not; all I ask,
" Is yet once more in this sad world, to kneel
" UPON MY FATHER'S GRAVE, and kiss the earth.—
" When the fourth morning gleam'd along the deep,
" 'ENGLAND, OLD ENGLAND!' burst the general cry:
" 'ENGLAND, OLD ENGLAND!' Every eye, intent,
" Was turn'd; and Godwin pointed with his sword
" To Flamborough, pale rising o'er the surge:
" 'Nearer into the kingdom's heart bear on

" ' The death-storm of our vengeance!' Godwin cried.
" Soon, like a cloud, the Northern Foreland rose—
" Know ye those cliffs, tow'ring in giant state?
" But hark! along the shores alarum-bells
" Ring out more loud—trump answers trump—the swords
" Of hurrying horsemen, and projected spears,
" Flash to the sun—On yonder castle-walls
" A thousand bows are bent—Again, our course
" Back to the north is turn'd. Now twilight veil'd
" The sinking sands of Yarmouth, and we heard
" A long deep toll from many a village tow'r
" On shore—and lo! the scatter'd in-land lights,
" That sprinkled, winding ocean's lowly verge,
" At once are lost in darkness—' GOD IN HEAVEN,
" ' IT IS THE CURFEW!' Godwin cried, and smote
" His forehead. 'We all heard that sullen sound
" For the first time, that night; but the winds blew—
" Our ship sail'd out of hearing; yet we thought
" Of the poor mother, who on winter nights,
" When her belated husband from the wood

" Was not come back), her lonely taper lit,
" And turn'd the glass, and saw the faggot-flame
" Shine on the faces of her little ones—
" Those times will ne'er return.
" Darkness descends;
" Again the sun is rising o'er the waves:
" And now hoarse Humber roars beneath our keels,
" And we have landed——"
" Yea, and struck a blow,
" Such as may make the crowned Conqueror quail,"
Edgar replied.
" Grant, Heav'n, that we may live,"
Adela cried, " in love and peace again,
" When every storm is past—But this good man
" Is silent—Ailric, does no hope, e'en now,
" Arise on thy dark heart? Good father, speak."

With aspect mild (on which its fitful light
The watch-tow'r lamp threw pale) the monk replied.

"Youth, on thy light hair, and ingenuous brow,
"Most comely sits the morn of life; on me,
"And this bare head, the night of time descends
"In sorrow. I look back upon the past,
"And think of joy and sadness upon earth,
"Like the vast ocean's fluctuating toil
"From everlasting! I have seen its waste
"Now in the sunshine sleeping—now high-ridged
"With storms; and such the kingdoms of the earth.
"Yes, youth, and flattering fortune, and the light
"Of summer days, are as the radiance
"That flits along the solitary waves,
"E'en whilst we gaze, and say, 'how beautiful!'
"So fitful and so perishing the dream
"Of human things. But there is light above,
"Undying; and, at times, faint harmonies
"Heard, by the weary pilgrim, in his way
"O'er perilous rocks, and through unwater'd wastes,
"Who looks up, fainting, and prays earnestly,
"To pass into that rest, whence sounds so sweet

" Come, whispering of hope; else it were best,
" Beneath the load the forlorn heart endures,
" To sink at once; to shut the eyes on things
" That scar the sight; and so to wrap the soul
" In sullen, tearless, ruthless apathy!
" Therefore, midst ev'ry human change, I drop
" A tear upon the cross, and all is calm;
" Yea, full of blissful—and of brightest views,
" On this dark tide of time.
" Youth, thou hast known
" Adversity; even in thy morn of life,
" The spring-tide rainbow fades, and many days,
" And many years, perchance, of weal or woe
" Hang o'er thee: happy, if through ev'ry change
" Thy constant heart, thy stedfast view, be fix'd
" Upon that better kingdom, where the crown
" Immortal is held out to holy hope,
" Beyond the clouds that rest upon the grave.
" Oh! I remember when King Harold stood
" Blooming in youth like thee: I saw him crown'd—

"I heard the loud voice of a nation hail
"His rising star: then, flaming in mid-heaven
"The red portentous comet,[6] like the hand
"Upon the wall, came forth: its fatal course
"All mark'd, and gazed in terror, as it look'd,
"With lurid light, upon this land. It pass'd—
"Old men had many bodings; but I saw,
"Reckless, King Harold, in his plumed helm,
"Ride foremost of the mailed chivalry,
"That, when the fierce Norwegian[7] pass'd the seas,
"Met his host, man to man; I saw the sword,
"Advanced and glittering, in the victor's hand,
"That smote the HARDRADA to the earth! To-day,
"King Harold rose, like an avenging God,
"To-morrow (so it seem'd, so short the space,)
"To-morrow, through the field of blood, we sought
"His mangled corse amid the heaps of slain—
"Shall I recount th' event more faithfully?
"Its spectred memory never since that hour
"Has left my heart.

" WILLIAM was in his tent,
" Spread on the battle-plain, on that same night
" When seventy thousand dead lay at his feet.
" They, who at sun-rise, with bent bows and spears,
" Confronted and defied him, at his feet
" Lay dead!—alone, he watches in his tent,
" At midnight—midst a sight so terrible
" We came—we stood before him, where he sat,
" I and my brother Osgood. ' Who are ye?'
" Stern he inquired; and Osgood thus replied.
" ' Conqueror, and Lord, and soon to be a King,
" ' We, two poor monks of Waltham Abbey, kneel
" ' Before thee, sorrowing! He who is slain
" ' To us was bountiful. He raised those walls
" ' Where we devote our life to pray'r and praise.
" ' Oh! by the mercies which the God of all
" ' Hath shown to thee this day, grant our request;
" ' To search for his dead body, through this field
" ' Of terror, that his bones may rest with us.'

" ' Your king hath met the meed of broken faith,'
" William replied: ' But yet he shall not want
" ' A sepulchre; and on this very spot
" ' My purpose stands, as I have vow'd to God,
" ' To build an holy monastery: here,
" ' A hundred monks shall pray for all who fell
" ' In this dread strife; and YOUR KING HAROLD here
" ' Shall have due honours and a stately tomb.
" Still on our knees, we answer'd, ' Oh! not so,
" ' Dread Sovereign;—hear us, of your clemency.
" ' We beg his body; beg it for the sake
" ' Of our successors; beg it for ourselves,
" ' That we may bury it in the same spot
" ' Himself ordain'd when living; where the choirs
" ' May sing for his repose, in distant years,
" ' When we are dust and ashes.'
" ' Then go forth,
" ' And search for him, at the first dawn of day,'
" King William said. We cross'd our breasts, and pass'd,
" Slow-rising, from his presence. So we went,

" In silence, to the quarry of the dead.
" The sun rose on that still and dismal host.
" Toiling from corse to corse, we trod in blood—
" From morn till noon toiling, and then I said,
" 'Seek Editha, her whom he loved.' She came;
" And through the field of death she pass'd: she look'd
" On many a face, ghastly upturn'd; her hand
" Unloosed the helmet, smooth'd the clotted hair,
" And many livid hands she took in hers;
" Till stooping o'er a mangled corse, she shriek'd,
" Then into tears burst audibly, and turn'd
" Her face, and with a falt'ring voice pronounced,
" 'Oh! Harold!' We took up, and bore the corse
" From that sad spot, and wash'd the ghastly wound
" Deep in the forehead, where the broken barb
" Was fix'd.
" So welt'ring from the field, we bore
" King Harold's corse. A hundred Norman knights
" Met the sad train, with pikes that trail'd the ground.
" Our old men pray'd, and spoke of evil days

‘ To come; the women smote their breasts and wept;
“ The little children knelt beside the way,
“ As on to Waltham the funereal car
“ Moved slow. Few and disconsolate the train
“ Of English earls, for few, alas! remain’d,
“ So many in the field of death lay cold.
“ The horses slowly paced, till Waltham towers
“ Before us rose. THERE, with long taper’d blaze,
“ Our brethren met us, chanting, two and two,
“ The ‘Miserere’ of the dead. And THERE—
“ But, my child Adela, you are in tears—
“ There at the foot of the HIGH ALTAR lies
“ The LAST OF SAXON KINGS.—Sad Editha,
“ At distance, watch’d the rites, and from that hour
“ We never saw her more.”

A distant trump
Now rung—again! again!—and thrice a trump
Has answer’d from the walls of Ravenspur.
“ My brothers! they are here!” Adela cried,
And left the tow’r in breathless ardour. “ YORK
“ Flames to the sky!” a general voice was heard—

The drawbridge clanks—into the inner court
A mailed man rides on—" York is no more!"
The cry without redoubles—On the ground
The rider flung his bloody sword, and raised
His helm dismounting—the first dawn of day
Gleam'd on the shatter'd plume. " Oh! Adela,"
He cried, " your brother Godwin"—and she flew,
And murmuring, " my brave brother!" hid her face,
Clasping his mailed breast. Soon gazing round,
She cried, " But where is Edmund? Was he wont
" To linger?"
" Edmund has a sacred charge,"
Godwin replied. " But trust his anxious love,
" We soon shall hear his voice. I need some rest—
" 'Tis now broad day; but we have watch'd and fought:
" I can sleep sound, though the shrill bird of morn
" Mount and upbraid my slumbers with her song."

Tranquil and clear the autumnal day declined:
The barks at anchor cast their lengthen'd shades
On the gray bastion'd walls; airs from the deep

Wander'd, and touch'd the cordage as they pass'd,
Then hover'd with expiring breath, and stirr'd
Scarce the quiescent pennant: the bright sea
Lay silent in its glorious amplitude,
Without: far up, in the pale atmosphere,
A white cloud, here and there, hung over-head,
And some red freckles streak'd the horizon's edge,
Far as the sight could reach: beneath the rocks,
That rear'd their dark brows beetling o'er the bay,
The gulls and guillemots, with short, quaint cry,
Just broke the sleeping stillness of the air,
Or skimming almost touch'd the level main,
With wings far seen, and more intensely white,
Opposed to the blue space; whilst Panope
Roll'd in the offing. Humber's ocean-stream,
Inland, went sounding on, by rocks, and sands,
And castle, yet so sounding as it seem'd
A voice amidst the hush'd and listening world
That spoke of peace; whilst from the bastion's point

* The porpoise.

One piping red-breast might almost be heard.
Such quiet all things hush'd, so peaceable
The hour: the very swallows, ere they leave
The coast to pass a long and weary way
O'er ocean's solitude, seem to renew
Once more their summer feelings, as a light
So sweet would last for ever, whilst they flock
In the brief sunshine of the turret-top—
'Twas at this hour of evening, Adela
And Godwin, now restored by rest, went forth,
Link'd arm in arm, upon the eastern beach,
Beyond the head-land's shade. If such an hour
Seem'd smiling on the heart, how smiled it now,
To him, who yesternight, a soldier, stood
Amid the direst sight of human strife,
And bloodshed; heard the cries, the trumpet's blast,
Ring o'er the dying; saw, with all its tow'rs,
A city blazing to the midnight sky,
And mangled groups of miserable men,
Gasping or dead, whilst with his iron heel

He splash'd the blood beneath! How chang'd the scene!
The sun's last light upon the battlements,
The sea, the landscape, the peace-breathing air,
Remember'd both, of the departed hours
Of early life, when once they had A HOME,
A COUNTRY, where their father wore a crown.
What changes since that time, for them, and all
They loved! how many found an early grave,
Cut off by the red sword! how many mourn'd,
Scatter'd by various fates, through distant lands!
How desolate their own poor country, bound
By the Oppressor's chain! As thoughts like these
Arose, the bells of rural Nevilthorpe
Rung out a joyous peal, rung merrily,
For tidings heard from York: their melody
Mingled with things forgotten. Adela
That instant turn'd to hide her tears, and saw
Her brother Edmund, leading by the hand
A boy of lovely mien, and footstep light,
Along the sands. "My sister," Edmund cried,

" See, here, a foot-page I have brought from York,
" To serve a lady fair." The boy held out
His hand to Adela, as he would say,
" Look, and protect me, lady." Adela,
Advancing with a smile and glowing cheek,
Cried, " Welcome, truant brother," and then took
The child's right hand, and said, " My pretty page,
" And have you not a tale to tell to me?"
The boy spake nothing, but look'd earnestly
And anxiously at Edmund. Edmund said,
" If he is silent, I must speak for him.
" 'Twas when the Minster flamed, and, sword in hand,
" Godwin, and Waltheof, and stern Hereward,
" Directed the red slaughter, black with smoke
" I burst into the citadel, and saw—
" Not the grim warder, with his huge axe up,
" But o'er her child a frantic mother, mute [0]
" With horror, in delirious agony,
" Clasping it to her bosom; stern and still
" The father stood, his hand upon his brow,

" As praying, in that hour, that God might make,
" In mercy, the last trial brief. ' FEAR NOT—
" ' I AM A MAN!—nay, fear not ME,' I cried,
" And seizing this child's hand, in safety placed,
" Amidst the smoke, and sounds and sights of death,
" Him and his mother! she with bursting heart
" Knelt down to bless me: when I saw that boy,
" So beautiful, I thought of Adela,
" And said, ' Oh! trust with his preserver this
" ' Your darling; for his safety, lo! I pledge
" ' My honour and my life.'
" And I have brought
" My trusted charge, that you, my Adela,
" May show him gentler courtesy than those,
" Whom war in its stern trade has almost steel'd."
His sister kiss'd the child's light hair and cheek,
And folded his small hands in hers, and said,
" You shall be my true knight, and wear a plume,
" Wilt thou not, boy? and for a lady's love
" Fight, like a valiant soldier?"—" I will die,"

The poor child said, "for friends like those who saved
"My father and my mother;" and again
Adela kiss'd his forehead and his eyes,
And said, "But we are SAXONS!"
As she spoke,
The winds began to muster, and the sea
Swell'd with a sound more solemn, whilst the sun
Was sinking, and its last, and lurid light,
Streak'd the long line of cumbrous clouds, that hung
In wild red masses o'er the murmuring deep,
Now flick'ring fast with foam. The sea-fowl flew
Rapidly on, o'er the black-lifted surge,
Borne down the wind, and then was seen no more.
Meantime the dark deep wilder heaves, and hark!
Heavily, over-head the gather'd storm
Comes sounding!
Haste!—and in the castle-keep
List to the winds and waves that roar without.

The Grave of the last Saxon.

CANTO THE SECOND.

Waltham Forest—Tower—William and his Barons.

THERE had been fearful sounds in th' air last night
In the wild wolds of Holderness, when York
Flam'd to the midnight sky, and spells of death
Were heard amidst the depth of Waltham wood;
For there the wan and wëird sisters met
Their imps, and the dark spirits that rejoice
When foulest deeds are done on earth, and there
In dread accordance rose their dismal joy.

"Around, around, around,
"Troop and dance we to the sound,
"Whilst mocking imps cry, Ho! ho! ho!
"On earth there will be Woe! more woe!"

SPIRIT OF THE EARTHQUAKE.

Arise, swart Fiends, 'tis I command—
Burst your caves, and rock the land.

SPIRIT OF THE STORM.

Loud tempests, sweep the conscious wood!

SPIRIT OF THE BATTLE.

I scent from earth more blood! more blood!

SPIRIT OF THE FIRE.

When the wounded cry,
And the craven die,
I will ride on the spires,
And the red volumes of the bursting fires.

SPIRITS, AND NIGHT-HAGS.

" Around, around, around,
" Dance we to the dismal sound
" Of dying cries and mortal woe,
" Whilst mocking imps shout, Ho! ho! ho!"

FIRST SPIRIT.

Hear!
Spirits, that our bests perform
In the earthquake or the storm,
Appear, appear!

A fire is lighted—the pale smoke goes up:—
Obscure, terrific features through the clouds
Are seen, and a wild laughter heard, "We come!"

MINISTERING SPIRITS SING.

1.

I have syllables of dread;
They can wake the dreamless dead.

2.

I, a dark sepulchral song,
That can lead Hell's phantom-throng.

3.

Like a nightmare I will rest
This night upon KING WILLIAM's breast!

SPIRITS, AND NIGHT-HAGS.

" Around, around, around,
" Dance we to the dismal sound
" Of dying shrieks and mortal woe,
" Whilst antic imps shout, Ho! ho! ho!"

They vanish'd, and the earth shook where they stood.

That night, KING WILLIAM first, within the TOW'R,
Received his vassal Barons—in that TOW'R, (11)
Which oft since then has echo'd to night-shrieks
Of secret murder, or the lone lament—
Now other sounds were heard, for on this night
Its canopied and vaulted chambers rung
With minstrelsy; whilst sounds of long acclaim
Re-echoed, from the loop-holes, o'er the Thames:—
The drawbridge, and the pond'rous cullis-gate,
Ffown'd on the moat—the flanking towers aspired
O'er the embattled walls, where proudly waved

The Norman banner. WILLIAM, laugh to scorn,
The murmurs of conspiracy and hate,
That round thee gather, like the storms of night
Mustering, when murder hides her visor'd mien!
Now, what hast Thou to fear? Let the fierce Dane
Into the centre of thy kingdom sweep,
With hostile armament, even like the tide
Of the hoarse Humber, on whose waves he rode!
Let foes confederate; let one voice of hate,
One cry of instant vengeance, one deep curse,
Be heard, from Waltham woods to Holderness!
Let Waltheof, stern in steel, let Hereward,
Impatient as undaunted, flash their swords;—
Let the boy Edgar, back'd by Scotland's King,
Advance his feeble claim, and don his casque,
Whose brows might better a blue bonnet grace;
Let Edwin and vindictive Morcar join
The sons of Harold: what hast thou to fear?
LONDON'S SOLE TOW'R might laugh their strength to scorn!
Upon that night, when YORK'S proud castle fell,

Here William held his court. The torches glared
On crest or crozier. Knights and prelates bow'd
Before THEIR SOVEREIGN. He, his knights and peers
Surveying with a stern complacency,
Inclined not from his seat, o'ercanopied
With golden valance, woven by no hand,
Save of the Queen. Yet calm his countenance
Shone, and his brow a dignified repose
Mark'd kingly; high his forehead, and besprent
With dark hair, interspersed with gray; his eye
Glanced amiable, chiefly when the light
Of a brief smile attemper'd majesty.
His beard was dark and heavy, yet diffused,
Low as the lion ramping on his breast
Engrail'd upon the mail [12].

One approach'd,
And knelt, then rising, placed the diadem
Upon his brow, with laurels intertwined.
Again the voice of acclamation rung,
And from the galleries a hundred harps

Resounded ROLAND's song! "LONG LIVE the King!"
The barons, and the prelates, and the knights,
"Long live the Conqueror!" cried; "a God on earth!"
That instant the high-vaulted chamber shook [13]
As with a blast from heaven, and all was mute
Around him, and the very fortress rock'd,
As it would topple on their heads: He rose
Disturb'd and frowning, for tumultuous thoughts
Crowded like night upon his heart; then waved
His hand!—The barons, abbots, knights, retire.
Behold him now alone! before a lamp
A crucifix appears; upon the ground
Lies the same sword that Hastings' battle dyed
Deep to the hilt in gore;—behold, he kneels
And prays, "Thou only, Lord, art great,—
"Have mercy on my sins!" The crucifix
Shook as he spoke, shook visibly! and, hark!
There is a low moan, as of dying men,
At distance heard.

Then William first knew fear [14].

He had heard tumults of the battle-field,
The noise, the glorious hurrahs, and the clang
Of trumpets round him, but no sound like this
Ere smote with unknown terror on his heart,
As if the eye of God that moment turn'd
And saw it beating.

Rising slow, he flung
Upon a couch his agitated limbs:—
The lamp was near him; on the ground his sword
And helmet lay,—short troubled slumbers stole,
And darkly rose the spirit of his dream.

He saw a field of blood,—it pass'd away;—
A glittering palace rose, with mailed men
Throng'd, and the voice of multitudes was heard
Acclaiming: suddenly the sounds were ceased,
The glittering palace vanish'd, and, behold,
Long winding cloisters, echoing to the chant
Of stoled fathers; and the mass-song ceased—
Then a dark tomb appear'd, and, lo! a shape
As of a phantom-king rose!

Nearer it came,
And nearer yet—in silence—through the gloom.
Advancing,—still advancing; the cold glare
Of armour shone as it approach'd, and now
It stands o'er William's couch! The spectre gazed
Awhile, then lifting its dark visor up,
(Horrible vision!) show'd a grisly wound
Deep in its forehead, and therein appear'd
Gouts, as yet dropping from an arrow's point
Infix'd! And that red arrow's deadly barb
The shadow drew, and pointed at the breast
Of William; and the blood dropp'd on his breast;
And through his steely arms one drop of blood
Came cold as death's own hand upon his heart!
Whilst a deep voice was heard, "Now sleep in peace,
"I am avenged!"
Starting, he exclaim'd,
"Hence, horrid phantom! Ho! Fitz-alain, ho!
"Montgomerie!" Each baron, with a torch,
Before him stood! "By dawn of day," he cried,

"We will to horse. What passes in our thoughts
"We shall unfold hereafter. By St. Anne,
"Albeit, not ten thousand phantoms sent
"By the dead Harold can divert our course,
"They may bear timely warning.
"'Tis yet night—
"Give me a battle-song, ere daylight dawns;
"The song of Roland, or of Charlemagne!—
"Or our own fight at Hastings!—
"Torches!—ho!
"And let the gallery blaze with lights! Awake,
"Harpers of Normandy, awake! By Heav'n,
"I will not sleep till your full chords ring out
"The song of England's conquest! Torches!—ho!"
He spoke! again the blazing gallery
Echo'd the harpers' song. Old Eustace led
The choir, and, whilst the king pac'd to and fro,
Thus rose the bold, exulting symphony.

SONG OF THE BATTLE OF HASTINGS.

1.

The Norman armament, beneath thy rocks St. Valerie,
Is moor'd; and, streaming to the morn, three hundred banners fly;
Of crimson silk, with golden cross, effulgent o'er the rest,
That banner, proudest in the fleet, streams, which the Lord had bless'd.
The gale is fair, the sails are set, cheerly the south wind blows,
And Norman archers, all in steel, have grasp'd their good yew-bows;
Aloud the harpers strike their harps, whilst morning light is flung
Upon the cross-bows and the shields, that round the masts are hung.'

Speed on, ye brave, 'tis WILLIAM leads; bold Barons, at his word,
Lo! sixty thousand men of might for WILLIAM draw the sword.

2.

So, bound to England's southern shore, we roll'd upon the seas,
And gallant the white sails were set, and swelling to the breeze.
"On, on, to victory or death!" now rose the general cry;
The minstrels sung, "On, on, ye brave, to death or victory!"
Mark yonder ship, how straight she steers: ye knights and barons brave,
'Tis WILLIAM'S ship, and proud she rides, the foremost o'er the wave.
And now we hail'd the English coast, and, lo! on Beachy Head,
The radiance of the setting sun majestical is shed.

The fleet sail'd on, till, Pevensey! we saw thy welcome strand;
Duke WILLIAM now his anchor casts, and dauntless leaps to land.

3.

The English host, by HAROLD led, at length appear in sight,
And now they raise a deafening shout, and stand prepar'd for fight;
The hostile legions halt awhile, and their long lines display,
Now front to front they stand, in still and terrible array.
Give out the word, "God, and our right!" rush like a storm along,
LIFT UP GOD'S BANNER, and advance, resounding ROLAND'S SONG!
Ye, spearmen, poise your lances well, by brave MONTGOMERIE led,
Ye, archers, bend your bows, and draw the arrows to the head.
They draw—the bent bows ring—huzzah! another flight, and, hark!

How the sharp arrowy shower beneath the sun goes hissing dark.

Hark! louder grows the deadly strife, till all the battle-plain

Is red with blood, and heap'd around with men and horses slain.

On! Normans, on! DUKE WILLIAM cried, and, HAROLD, tremble Thou,

Now think upon thy perjury, and of thy broken vow.

The banner* of thy ARMED KNIGHT, thy shield, thy helm, are vain—

The fatal shaft has sped,—by Heav'n! it hisses in his brain!—

So William won the English crown, and all his foe-men beat,—

And Harold, and his Britons brave, lay silent at his feet.

"Enough! the day is breaking," cried the King:

"Away! away! be armed at my side,

"Without attendants, and to HORSE, to HORSE!

* Harold's banner had the device of an armed knight.

The Grave of the last Saxon.

CANTO THE THIRD.

Waltham Abbey and Forest — Wild Woman of the Woods.

At Waltham Abbey, o'er King Harold's grave
A requiem was chanted; for last night
A passing spirit shook the battlements,
And the pale monk, at midnight, as he watch'd
The lamp, beheld it tremble; whilst the shrines
Shook, as the deep foundations of the fane
Were mov'd. "Oh! pray for Harold's soul!" he cried.
And now, at matin bell, the monks were met,
And slowly pacing round the grave, they sung:

DIRGE.

1.

Peace, oh! peace be to the shade
Of him who here in earth is laid:
Saints, and spirits of the blest,
Look upon his bed of rest;
Forgive his sins, propitious be—
Dona pacem, Domine,
Dona pacem, Domine!

2.

When, from yonder window's height,
The moonbeams on the floor are bright,
Sounds of viewless harps shall die,
Sounds of Heaven's own harmony!
Forgive his sins, propitious be—
Dona pacem, Domine,
Dona pacem, Domine!

3.

By the spirits of the brave,
Who died the land they lov'd to save;
By the soldier's faint farewell,
By Freedom's blessing, where he fell;
Forgive his sins, propitious be—
Dona pacem, Domine,
Dona pacem, Domine!

4.

By a nation's mingled moan,
By Liberty's expiring groan,
By the saints, to whom 'tis given
To bear that parting groan to Heaven;
To his shade propitious be—
Dona pacem, Domine,
Dona pacem, Domine!

5

The PROUD and MIGHTY———

As they sung, the doors
Of the west portal, with a sound that shook
The vaulted roofs, burst open; and, behold!
An armed Norman knight, the helmet clos'd
Upon his visage, but of stature tall,
His coal-black armour clanking as he trod,
Advancing up the middle aisle alone,
Approach'd: he gaz'd in silence on the GRAVE
OF THE LAST SAXON; there awhile he stood,
Then knelt a moment, muttering a brief prayer:
The fathers cross'd their breasts—the mass-song ceas'd:—
Heedless of all around, the mailed man
Rose up, nor speaking, nor inclining, pac'd
Back through the sounding aisle, and left the fane.
The monks their interrupted song renew'd:

The proud and mighty, when they die,
With the crawling worm shall lie;
But who would not A CROWN resign,
HAROLD, for a rest like thine?

Saviour Lord, propitious be—
Dona pacem, Domine,
Dona pacem, Domine!

" Pacem" (as slow the stoled train retire),
" Pacem," the shrines and fretted roofs return'd.

'Twas told, three Norman knights, in armour, spurr'd
Their foaming steeds to the West Abbey door;
But who it was, that with his visor clos'd
Pass'd up the long and echoing fane alone,
And knelt on Harold's grave-stone, none could tell!
The stranger knights in silence left the fane,
And soon were lost in the surrounding shades
Of Waltham forest.
He, who foremost rode,
Pass'd his companions, on his fleeter steed,
And, muttering in a dark and dreamy mood,
Spurr'd on alone, till, looking round, he heard
Only the murmur of the woods above,

Whilst soon all traces of a road were lost
In the inextricable maze. From morn
Till eve, in the wild woods he wander'd lost.
Night follow'd, and the gathering storm was heard
Among the branches. List! there is no sound
Of horn far off, or tramp of toiling steed,
Or call of some belated forester;
No lonely taper lights the waste; the woods
Wave high their melancholy boughs, and bend
Beneath the rising tempest. Heard ye not
Low thunder to the north? The solemn roll
Redoubles through the dark'ning forest deep,
That sounds through all its solitude, and rocks,
As the long peal at distance rolls away.
Hark! the loud thunder crashes overhead,
And, as the red fire flings a fitful glare,
The branches of old oaks, and mossy trunks,
Distinct and visible shine out; and lo!
Interminable woods a moment seen,
Then lost again in deeper, lonelier night.

The torrent rain o'er the vast leafy cope
Comes sounding, and the drops fall heavily
Where the strange knight is shelter'd by the trunk
Of a huge oak, whose dripping branches sweep
Far round. Oh! happy, if beneath the flash
Some castle's banner'd battlements were seen,
Where the lone minstrel, as the storm of night
Blew loud without, beside the blazing hearth
Might dry his hoary locks, and strike his harp
(The fire relumin'd in his aged eyes)
To songs of Charlemagne!
Or, happier yet,
If some gray convent's bell remote proclaim'd
The hour of midnight service, when the chant
Was up, and the long range of windows shone
Far off, on the lone woods, whilst Charity
Might bless and welcome, in a night like this,
The veriest outcast! ANGEL OF THE STORM!
Ha! thy red bolt this instant shiv'ring rives
That blasted oak!

The horse starts back, and bounds
From the knight's grasp. The way is dark and wild—
So dark and wild, as if the solitude
Had never heard the sound of human steps.
Pond'ring he stood, when by the lightning's glance
The knight now mark'd a small and craggy path.
Descending through the woody labyrinth,
He track'd his way slowly from brake to brake,
Till now he gain'd a deep sequester'd glen—
"I fear not storms, nor thunders, nor the sword,"
The knight exclaim'd: "that eye alone I fear!
"God's stern and stedfast eye upon the heart!
"Yet peace is in the grave where HAROLD sleeps.

"Who speaks of Harold?" cried a woman's voice,
Heard through the deep night of the woods—"HE spoke,"
A stern voice answer'd, "HE, of Harold spoke,
"Who fear'd his sword in the red front of war,
"Less than the powers of darkness:" and he cross'd
His breast, for at that instant rose the thought

Of the weird sisters of the wold, that mock
Night wanderers, and "syllable men's names"
In savage solitude—"If now," he cried,
"Dark minister, thy spells of wizard power
"Have rais'd the storm and wild winds up, APPEAR!"
He scarce had spoken, when, by the red flash
That glanc'd along the glen, half visible
Appear'd a tall, majestic female form;
So visible, her eyes' intenser light
Shone wildly through the darkness; and her face,
On which one pale flash more directly shone,
Was like a ghost's by moonlight, as she stood
A moment seen: her lips appear'd to move
Muttering, whilst her long locks of ebon hair
Stream'd o'er her forehead, by the bleak winds blown
Upon her heaving breast.
The knight advanc'd—
Th' expiring embers from a cave within,
Now waken'd by the night-air, shot a light,
Fitful and trembling, and this human form,

If it was human, at the entrance stood,
As seem'd, of a rude cave. You might have thought
She had strange spells, such a mysterious power
Was round her, such terrific solitude,
Such night, as of the kingdom of the grave,
Whilst hurricanes seem'd to obey her hest.

And she no less admired, when, front to front,
By the rekindling ember's darted gleam
A mailed man, of proud illustrious port,
She mark'd; and thus, but with unfaltering voice,
She spake—

" Yes! it was HAROLD's name I heard!
" Whence, and what art thou? I have watch'd the night,
" And listen'd to the tempest as it howl'd,
" And whilst I listening lay, methought I heard,
" Even now, the tramp as of a rushing steed—
" Therefore I rose, and look'd into the dark,
" And now I hear one speak of Harold: say,
" Whence, and what art thou, solitary man?

" If lost and weary, enter this poor shed—
" If wretched, pray with me—if on dark deeds
" Intent, I am a most poor woman, cast
" Into the depths of mortal misery!
" The desolate have nought to lose?—pass on!
" I had not spoken, but for Harold's name,
" By thee pronounc'd: it sounded in my ears
" As of a better world—ah, no! of days
" Of happiness in this.—Whence, who art THOU?"

" I am a NORMAN, woman; more to know
" Seek not:—and I have been to HAROLD'S GRAVE,
" Remembering the MIGHTIEST are but dust;
" And I have pray'd the peace of God might rest
" UPON HIS SOUL."

" And, by our blessed Lord,
" The deed was holy," that lorn woman said;
" And may the benediction of all saints,
" Whoe'er thou art, rest on thy head. But say,
" What perilous mischance hath hither led
" Thy footsteps in an hour and night like this?"

" Over his grave, of whom we spake, I heard
" The mass-song sung! I knelt upon his grave,
" And pray'd for my own sins! I left the fane,
" And heard the chanted rite at distance die.
" Returning through these forest shades, with thoughts
" Not of this world, I press'd my panting steed
" The foremost of the Norman knights, and pass'd
" The track, that, leading to the forest-ford,
' Winds through the opening thickets—on a height
' I stood and listened, but no voice replied—
" The storm descended: at the lightning's flash
" My good steed burst the reins, and frantic fled—
" I was alone: the small and craggy path
" Led to this solitary glen; and here,
" As dark and troubled thoughts arose, I mused
" Upon the dead man's sleep; FOR GOD, I thought,
" THIS NIGHT, SPOKE IN THE ROCKING OF THE WINDS!"

" There is a JUDGE in heaven," the woman said,
" Who seeth all things; and there is a VOICE,
" Inaudible midst the tumultuous world,

" That speaks of fear or comfort to the heart
" When all is still! But shroud thee in this cave
" Till morning: such a sojourn may not please
" A courtly knight, like echoing halls of joy.
" I have but some wild roots, a bed of fern,
" And no companion save this bloodhound here,
" Who, at my beck, would tear thee to the earth—
" Yet enter—fear not"—And that poor abode
The proud knight enter'd, with rain-drenched plume.
" Yet here I dwell in peace," the woman said,
" Remote from towns, nor start at the dire sound
" Of that ACCURSED CURFEW!—Soldier-knight,
" Thou art a NORMAN! Had th'-invader spurn'd
" All charities in thy own native land,
" Yes—thou would'st know what injur'd Britons feel."

" Nay, ENGLISHWOMAN, thou dost wrong our king,"
The knight replied; " conspiracy and fraud
" Hourly surrounding him, at last compell'd
" Stern Rigour to awake. What! shall the bird

" Of thunder slumber on the citadel,
" And blench his eye of fire, when, looking down,
" He sees, in ceaseless enmity combin'd,
" Those who would pluck his feathers from his breast,
" And cast them to the winds? Woman, on thee,
" Haply, the tempest of the times has beat
" Too roughly; but thy griefs HE can requite!"

The indignant woman answer'd, " HE requite!
" Can he bring back the dead? Can he restore
" Joy to the broken-hearted? He requite!
" Can he pour plenty on the vales his frown
" Has blasted? bid sweet evening hear again
" The village pipe? and the fair flow'rs revive
" His bloody footstep crush'd? For poverty,
" I reck it not: what is to me the night,
" Spent cheerless, and in gloom, and solitude?
" I fix my eye upon that crucifix
" I mourn for those that are not—for my brave,
" My buried countrymen!—Of this no more!—

" Thou art a foe; but a brave soldier-knight
" Would scorn to wrong a woman; and if death
" Could arm my hand this moment, thou wert safe
" In a poor cottage as in royal halls.
" Here rest awhile till morning dawns—the way
" No mortal could retrace:—'twill not be long,
" And I can cheat the time with some old strain—
" For, Norman though thou art, thy soul has felt
" Ev'n as a man, when sacred sympathy
" This morning led thee to KING HAROLD'S GRAVE."

The woman sat beside the hearth, and stirr'd
The embers, or with fern or brushwood rais'd
A fitful flame, but cautious, lest its light
Some roving forester might mark. At times,
The small and trembling blaze shone on her face,
Still beautiful, and show'd the dark eye's fire
Beneath her long black locks. When she stood up,
A dignity, though in the garb of want,
Seem'd round her, chiefly when the brush-wood-blaze

Glanc'd through the gloom, and touch'd the dusky mail
Of the strange knight—then—with sad smile she sung:

Oh! when 'tis Summer weather,
And the yellow bee, with fairy sound,
The waters clear is humming round,
And the cuckoo sings unseen,
And the leaves are waving green—
Oh! then 'tis sweet,
In some remote retreat,
To hear the murmuring dove,
With those whom on earth alone we love,
And to wind through the green-wood together.

But when 'tis Winter weather,
And crosses grieve,
And friends deceive,
And rain and sleet
The lattice beat—
Oh! then 'tis sweet

To sit and sing
Of the friends, with whom, in the days of spring,
We roam'd through the green-wood together.

The bloodhound slept upon the hearth—he rais'd
His head, and, through the dusk, his eyes were seen,
Fiery, a moment; but again he slept,
When she her song renew'd.

"Though thy words might well deceive me—
That is pass'd—subdu'd I bend;
Yet, for mercy, do not leave me,
To the world without a friend!
Oh! thou art gone! and would, with thee,
Remembrance too had fled!
She lives to bid me weep, and see
The wreath I cherish'd dead.

The knight, through the dim lattice, watch'd the clouds
Of morn, now slowly struggling in the east,

When, with a voice more thrilling, and an air
Wilder, again a sad song she inton'd—

"Upon the field of blood,
Amidst the bleeding brave,
O'er his pale corse I stood—
But HE is in HIS GRAVE.
I wip'd his gory brow,
I smooth'd his clotted hair—
But he is at peace, in the cold ground now—
Oh! when shall WE meet there?"

At once, horns, trumpets, and the shouts of men,
Were heard above the valley. At the sound,
The knight, upstarting from his dreamy trance,
High rais'd his vizor, and his bugle rung,
Answering. "By God in heaven, thou ART THE KING!"
The woman said. Again the clarions rung—
Like lightning! Alain and Montgomerie
Spurr'd through the wood, and led a harness'd steed

To the lone cabin's entrance, whilst the train
Sent up a deaf'ning shout, " Long live the King!"
He, ere he vaulted to the saddle-bow,
Turn'd with a look benevolent, and cried,
" Barons and lords, to this poor woman here
" Haply I owe my life! Let HER NOT NEED!"
" Away!" she cried, " KING OF THESE REALMS, away!
" I ask not wealth nor pity—least from THEE,
" Of all men." As the day began to dawn,
More fix'd and dreadful seem'd her stedfast look,
The long black hair upon her labouring breast
Stream'd, whilst her neck, as in disdain, she rais'd
Swelling—her eyes a wild terrific light
Shot, and her voice, with intonation deep,
Utter'd a curse, that ev'n the bloodhound crouch'd
Beneath her feet, whilst with stern look she spoke:—
" Yes! I AM EDITHA! SHE whom he lov'd—
" SHE, whom thy sword has left in solitude,
" How desolate! yes—I AM EDITHA!—
" AND THOU HAST BEEN TO HAROLD'S GRAVE—oh! think,

" KING, WHERE THY OWN WILL BE! HE rests in peace;
" But ev'n a spot is to thy bones denied—
" I see thy carcass trodden under foot——
" THY CHILDREN—HIS, with filial reverence,
" Still think upon the spot where he is laid,
" Though distant and far-sever'd—But thy son*,
" Thy eldest born, ah! see, he lifts the sword
" Against his father's breast!—Hark, hark! the chase
" Is up! in that wild forest thou hast made!—
" The deer is flying—the loud horn resounds—
" Hurrah! the arrow that laid HAROLD low—
" It flies—it trembles in the RED KING'S HEART†!
" NORMAN, HEAV'N'S HAND IS ON THEE, and THE CURSE
" Of this devoted land! HENCE, TO THY THRONE!"—
The King a moment with compassion gaz'd,
And now the clarions, and the horns, and trumps
Rung louder; the bright banners in the winds
Wav'd beautiful; the neighing steeds aloft

* Robert of Normandy. † William Rufus, called the Red King.

Mantled their manes, and up the valley flew,
And soon have left behind, the glen, the cave
Of solitary Editha, and sounds
Of her last agony!
"Montgomerie,"
King William, turning, cried, "when this whole land
"Is portion'd (for till then we may not hope
"For lasting peace) FORGET NOT EDITHA*.

In the gray beam the spires of London shone,
And the proud banner on the bastion
Of William's Tower was seen above the Thames,
As the gay train, slow winding through the woods,
Approach'd; when, lo! with spurs of blood, and voice
Falt'ring, upon a steed, whose lab'ring chest
Heav'd, and whose bit was wet with blood and froth,
A courier met them.

* It is a singular fact, that the name of Editha Pulcherrima occurs in Domesday.—See Turner.

"YORK!—oh King!" he cried,
"YORK is in ashes!—all thy NORMANS slain!"

"Now, by the splendour of the throne of God!"
King William cried, "nor woman, man, nor child,
"Shall live."—Terrific flash'd his eye of fire,
And darker grew his frown; then, looking up,
He drew his sword, and with a vow to Heav'n,
Amid his barons, to the trumpet's clang
Rode onward (breathing vengeance) TO THE TOW'R!

The Grave of the last Saxon.

CANTO THE FOURTH.

Wilds of Holderness—Hags—Parting on the Humber—Waltham Abbey, and Grave—Conclusion.

THE moon was high—when, mid the wildest wolds
Of Holderness, where erst that structure vast,
An idol-temple *, in old heathen times
Frown'd, with gigantic shadow to the moon,
That oft had heard the dark song, and the groans
Of midnight sacrifice—
There, the wan sisters met,—
They circled the rude stone, and call'd the dead,
And sung by turns their more terrific song:

* This temple Camden places at Delgovitia.

FIRST HAG.

I look'd in the seer's prophetic glass,
And saw the deeds that should come to pass—
From Carlisle Wall to Flamborough Head,
The reeking soil was heap'd with dead.

SECOND HAG.

The towns were stirring at dawn of day,
And the children went out in the morn to play;
The lark was singing on holt and hill—
I look'd again, but the towns were still,
The murder'd child on the ground was thrown,
And the lark was singing to heav'n alone.

THIRD HAG.

I saw a famish'd mother lie,
Her lips were livid, and glaz'd her eye;
The tempest was rising, and sung in the south,
And I snatch'd the blade of grass from her mouth.

FOURTH HAG.

By the rolling of the drums!
Hitherward KING WILLIAM comes:
The night is struggling with the day
Hags of darkness! hence! away!

WILLIAM is in the north—the avenging sword
Descended like a whirlwind where he pass'd—
Slaughter and Famine at his bidding wait,
Like lank, impatient bloodhounds, till he cries
"Pursue!" Again the Norman banner floats
Triumphant on the citadel of York,
Where, circled with the blazonry of arms,
Amid his Barons, WILLIAM holds his state.
The boy preserv'd from death, young MALET, kneels,
With folded hands:—His father, mother kneel,
Imploring clemency for HAROLD's sons—
For Edmund most. Bareheaded Waltheof bends,
And yields the keys!—A breathless courier came;
"What tidings?"—"O'er the seas the Danes are fled—
"Morcar and Edwin in Northumberland,

" Amidst its wildest mountains, seek to hide
" Their broken hopes—their troops are all dispers'd.
" Malcolm alone, and the boy Atheling,
" And the two sons of the dead Harold, wait
" The winds to bear them to the North away."—
" Bid forth a thousand spearmen," William cried:
" Now, by the resurrection, and the throne
" Of God, King Malcolm shall repent the hour
" He ere drew sword in England!—Hence, away!"

The west wind blows—the boat is on the beach,
The clansmen are embark'd—the pipe is heard—
Whilst thoughtful Malcolm and young Atheling
Linger the last upon the shore: and there
Are Harold's children, the gray-headed monk,
Godwin, and Edmund, and poor Adela:—
Then Malcolm spoke—" The lot is cast: oh! fly
" From this devoted land, and live with us,
" Amidst our lakes and mountains!"—" Adela,"
Atheling whisper'd, " does thy heart say Yes?
" For in this world we ne'er may meet again."

" The brief hour calls—come, Adela," exclaim'd
Malcolm, and kindly took her hand. She look'd
To heaven, and fell upon her knees—then rose,
And answer'd:

" Sire, when my brave father fell,
" We three were exiles on a distant shore,
" And never, or in solitude or courts,
" Was God forgotten—all is in his hand.
" When those whom I had lov'd from infancy
" Here join'd the din of arms, I came with them—
" With them I have partaken good and ill,
" Have in the self-same mother's lap been laid,
" The same eye gaz'd on us with tenderness,
" And the same mother pray'd prosperity
" Might still be ours through life! Alas! our lot,
" How different!

" Yet let THEM go with you,
" I argue not—the first time in our lives,
" If it be so, we here shall separate—
" Whatever fate betide, I will not go

" Till I have knelt upon MY FATHER'S GRAVE!"—
" 'Tis perilous to think," Atheling cried,
" Most perilous—how 'scape the Norman's eye?"—
She turn'd, and with a solemn calmness said,
" If we should perish—at the hour of death
" My father will look down from Heaven, and say,
" ' Come, my poor child!'—Oh! come where I am bless'd!'
" My brothers, seek your safety—Here I stand
" Resolv'd—and never will I leave these shores
" Till I have knelt upon MY FATHER'S GRAVE!"—
" We never will forsake thee!" Godwin cried.
" Let death betide!" said Edmund, " we will go—
" Yes! go with thee, or perish!"
As he spoke,
The pilot gave the signal—" Then farewell!"
King Malcolm cried, " friends lately met, and now
" To part for ever!" and he kiss'd the cheek
Of Adela, and took brave Godwin's hand
And Edmund's, and then said, almost in tears,
" It is not now too late! yet o'er my grave

" So might a duteous daughter weep!" " God speed
" Brave Malcolm to his father's land!" they cried.
The ships, beyond the promontory's point.
Were anchor'd—and the tide was ebbing fast.

Then Ailric—" Sire, not unforeseen by me
" Was this sad day:—Oh! King of Scotland, hear—
" I was a brother of that holy house,
" Where Harold's bones are buried—from my vows
" I was absolv'd, and follow'd—for I lov'd
" His children—follow'd them through every fate.
" My few gray hairs will soon descend in peace,
" When I shall be forgotten; but till THEN,
" My services, my last poor services,
" To THEM I have devoted, for the sake
" Of HIM, their father, and MY KING, to whom,
" All, in this world, I ow'd! Protect them, Lord,
" And bless them, when the turf is on my head,
" And, in their old age, may they sometimes think
" Of Ailric, cold and shrouded in his grave,

" When summer smiles.—Sire, listen, whilst I pray
" One boon of thy compassion; NOT for me—
" I reck not whether vengeance wake or sleep—
" But for the safety of this innocent maid
" I speak. South of the Humber, in a cave,
" Conceal'd amidst the rocks and tangled brakes,
" I have deposited some needful weeds
" For this sad hour—For well, indeed, I knew,
" If all should fail, this maiden's last resolve,
" TO KNEEL UPON HER FATHER'S GRAVE, OR DIE.
" For this I have provided: but the time
" Is precious, and the sun is west'ring slow:
" The fierce eye of the lion may be turn'd
" Upon this spot to-morrow! Adelu,
" Now, hear your friend, your father! the fleet hour
" Is passing, never to return: Oh! seize
" The instant.—Thou, King Malcolm, grant my pray'r!—
" If we embark, and leave the shores this night,
" The voice of fame will bruit it far and wide,
" That Harold's children fled with thee, and sought

" A refuge in thy kingdom—None will know
" Our destination—In thy boat convey'd,
" We may be landed near the rocky cave,—
" The boat again ply to thy ships, and they
" Plough homeward the north seas, whilst WE ARE left
" To FATE!"—Again the pilot's voice was heard—
And, o'er the sand-hills, an approaching file
Of Norman soldiers, with projected spears,
Already seem'd as rushing on their prey.
Then Ailric took the hand of Adela—
She and her brothers, and young Atheling,
And Scotland's king, are in one boat embark'd—
Meantime the sun sets red, and twilight shades
The sinking hills—The solitary boat
Has reach'd the adverse shore.
" Here, then, we part!"
King Malcolm said; and every voice replied,
" God speed brave Malcolm to his father's land!"

Ailric, the brothers, and their sister, left

The boat—they stood upon the moonlight beach,
Still list'ning to the sounds, as they grew faint,
Of the receding oars, and watching still
If one white streak at distance, as they dipp'd,
Were seen, till all was solitude around.
Pensive, they sought a refuge for that night
In the bleak ocean-cave.—The morning dawns,
The brothers have put off the plumes of war,
Dropping one tear upon the sword! Disguis'd
In garb to suit their fortunes, they appear
Like shipwreck'd seamen of Armorica,
By a Franciscan hermit through the land
Led to St. Alban's shrine, to offer vows—
Vows to the God, who heard them in that hour,
When all besides had perish'd in the storm.

Wreck'd near his ocean-cave, an eremite
(So went the tale of their disastrous fate)
Sustain'd them, and now guides them through a land
Of strangers—That fair boy was wont to sing

Upon the mast, when the still ship went slow
Along the seas, in sunshine—and that garb
Conceals the lovely, light-hair'd Adela.
The cuckoo's note in the deep woods was heard
When forth they far'd. At many a convent gate
They stood and pray'd for shelter, and their pace
Hasten'd, if high amid the clouds they mark'd
Some solitary castle lift its brow
Gray in the distance—hasten'd, so to reach,
Ere it grew dark, its hospitable tow'rs—
There the lithe minstrel sang his roundelay.

Listen, lords and ladies bright:
I can sing of many a knight
Who fought in paynim lands afar—
Of Bevis, or of Iscapar.
I have tales of wand'ring maids,
And fairy elves in haunted glades,
Of phantom-troops that silent ride
By the moonlight forest's side.

I have songs (fair maidens, hear!)
To warm the love-lorn lady's ear—
The choice of all my treasures take,
And grant us food for pity's sake.

When tir'd, at noon, by the white waterfall,
In some romantic and secluded glen,
They sat, and heard the blackbird overhead
Singing, unseen, a song, such as they heard
In infancy.—* So every vernal morn
Brought with it smell of flowers, or song of birds,
Mingled with many shapings of old things,
And days gone by!—Then up again, to scale
The airy mountain, and behold the plain
Stretching below, and fading far away,
How beautiful! yet still to feel a tear
Starting (even when it shone most beautiful),
To think, "HERE, in the country of our birth,

* William took the field in spring.

" No rest is ours!"

" ON, TO OUR FATHER'S GRAVE!"

So southward through the country they had pass'd
Now many days, and casual shelter found
In villages, or hermit's lonely cave,
Or castle, high-embattled on the point
Of some steep mountain, or in convent walls;
For most with pity heard his song, and mark'd
The countenance of the way-faring boy;
Or when the pale monk, with his folded hands
Upon his breast, pray'd, "For the love of God,
" Pity the poor," gave alms, and bade them " Speed!"
And now, in distant light, the pinnacles
Of a gray fane appear'd, whilst on the woods
Still evening shed its parting light:—" Oh! say—
" Say, villager, what tow'rs are those that rise
" Eastward beyond the alders?"

" Know ye not,"

He answer'd, " WALTHAM ABBEY? HAROLD there
" Is buried—He, who in the fight was slain

"At HASTINGS!"—To the cheek of Adela
A deadly paleness came. "On—let us on,"
Faintly she cried, and held her brother's arm,
And hid her face a moment with her hand!
And now the massy portal's sculptur'd arch
Before them rose.

"Say, porter," Ailric cried,
"Poor mariners, wreck'd on the northern shores,
"Ask charity!—Does aged Osgood live?
"Tell him a poor Franciscan, wand'ring far,
"And wearied, for the love of God would ask
"His charity."

Osgood came slowly forth—
The light that touch'd the western turret, fell
On his pale face. The pilgrim-father said,
"I am your brother Ailric—look on me!
"And THESE ARE HAROLD'S CHILDREN!"

Whilst he spoke,
Godwin, advancing, with emotion cried,
"We are his children! I am Godwin, this

" Is Edmund, and lo! poor and in disguise,
" Our sister!—we would KNEEL UPON HIS GRAVE—
" OUR FATHER'S!"
" Come yet nearer," Osgood said,
" Yet nearer!" and that instant Adela
Look'd up, and wiping from the lids a tear,
" Have you forgotten Adela?"
" Oh God!"
The old man trembling cried, " ye are indeed
" Our benefactor's children! Adela,
" Edmund, brave Godwin! welcome to these walls—
" Welcome, my old companion!" and he fell
Upon the neck of Ailric, and both wept.
Then Osgood—" Children of that honour'd lord
" Who gave us all, go near and bless his grave."
One parting sunbeam yet upon the floor
Rested—it pass'd away, and darker gloom
Was gathering in the aisles. Each footstep's sound
Was more distinctly heard, for all beside
Was silent. Slow along the glimmering fane

They pass'd, like shadows risen from the tombs.
The entrance-door was clos'd, lest ought intrude
Upon the sanctity of this sad hour!
The inner quair they enter, part in shade
And part in light, for now the rising moon
Began to glance upon the shrines, and tombs,
And pillars; trembling through the windows high
One beam, a moment, on that cold gray stone
Is flung—the word "Infelix"* is scarce seen—
"BEHOLD HIS GRAVE-STONE!" Osgood said. Each eye
Was turn'd. Awhile intent they gaz'd, then knelt
Before the altar, on the marble stone!
No sound was heard through all the dim expanse
Of the vast building, none but of the air
That came in dying echoes up the aisle,
Like whispers heard at the confession-chair.
Thus Harold's children, hand in hand, knelt down—
Upon THEIR FATHER'S GRAVE KNELT down! and pray'd—

* In some accounts it is said the only inscription on the tomb was "Infelix Harold."

"Have mercy on his soul—HAVE MERCY, LORD!"
They knelt a lengthen'd space, and bow'd their heads,
Some natural tears they shed, and cross'd their breasts,
Then, rising slowly up, look'd round, and saw
A monk approaching near, unmark'd before;
And in the farther distance the tall form
As of a female. He who wore the hood
And habit of a monk, approach'd and spoke—
"Brothers! beloved sister! know ye not
"These features?"—and he rais'd his hood—"Behold
"Me—me, your brother Marcus! whom these weeds,
"Since last we met, have hid from all the world:
"Let ME kneel with you HERE!"
When Adela
Beheld him, she exclaim'd, "Oh! do we meet
"Here, my lost brother, o'er a father's grave?
"You live, restor'd a moment in this world,
"To us as from the grave!" And Godwin took
His hand, and said, "My brother, tell us all—
"How have you liv'd unknown?—Oh! tell us all."

" When in that grave our father (he replied)
" Was laid, ye fled, and I in this sad land
" Remain'd to cope with fortune. To these walls
" I came, when Ailric, from his vows absolv'd,
" With you was wand'ring. None my lineage knew,
" Or name, but I, some time, had won regard
" From the Superior—O good knew me not,
" For with Earl Edwin I had liv'd from youth—
" To our Superior thus I knelt and pray'd:
" ' Sir, I beseech you, for the love of God,
" ' And of our Lady Mary, and St. John,
" ' You would receive me here to live and die
" ' Among you.'—What most mov'd my heart to take
" The vows, was this, that here, from day to day,
" From year to year, within the walls he rais'd,
" I might behold my Father's grave! This eve
" I sat in the Confessional, unseen,
" When you approach'd—I scarce restrain'd the tear,
" From many recollections, when I heard
" A tale of sorrow and of sin! Come near,

" WOMAN of woe!"—and a wan woman stood
Before them, tall and stately; her dark eyes
Shone, as th' uncertain lamp cast a brief glare,
And show'd her neck, and raven hair, and lips
Moving—She spoke not, but advanc'd and knelt—
She, too—on HAROLD'S GRAVE; then pray'd aloud,
" OH! GOD BE MERCIFUL TO HIM—AND ME!"
" Who art thou?" Godwin cried.
" Ah! know ye not
" The wretched EDITHA? NO CHILDREN'S LOVE
" Could equal MINE!—I trod among the dead!
" Did I not, fathers?—trod among the dead
" From corse to corse, or saw men's dying eyes
" Fix'd upon mine, and heard such groans as yet
" Rive, with remembrance, my torn heart—I found
" HIM, who rests here, where then he lay in blood!
" When he was buried, I beheld the rites
" At distance, and with broken heart retir'd
" To the wild woods; there I have liv'd unseen
" From that sad hour. Late, when the tempest rock'd,

" At midnight, a proud soldier shelter sought
" In my lone cell; 'twas when the storm was heard
" Through the deep forest, and he too had knelt
" At HAROLD's grave!—Who was it?—HE! the KING!
" Say, fathers, was it not the hand of God
" That led his footsteps there!—But has he learn'd
" Humility? oh! ask this bleeding land.
" Last night, a phantom came to me in dreams,
" And a voice said, 'Come, visit my cold grave!'
" I came, by some mysterious impulse led;
" I heard the even-song, and when the sound
" Had ceas'd, and all departed, save one monk,
" Who stood and gaz'd upon this grave alone,
" I pray'd that he would hear me, at this hour,
" Confess my secret sins, for my full heart
" Was labouring. It was Harold's son who sat
" In the Confessional, to me unknown—
" But all is now reveal'd—and lo! I stand
" Before you!"

As she spoke, a thrilling awe

Came to each heart: loftier she seem'd to stand
In the dim moonlight; sorrowful, yet stern,
Her aspect; and her breast was seen to beat:
Her eyes were fix'd, and shone with fearful light—
She rais'd her right hand, and her dark hair fell
Upon her neck, whilst all, scarce breathing, heard:
"My spirit labours!" she exclaim'd! "this night!
"The tomb! the altar! Ha! the vision strains
"My senses to oppression! Mark'd ye not
"The trodden throne restor'd? the Saxon line*
"Of England's monarchs bursting through the gloom?
"Lady, I look on thee—In distant years,
"Ev'n from the Northern throne which thou shalt share,†
"A warrior-monarch shall arise, whose arm,
"In concert with this country, now bow'd low,
"Shall tear the EAGLE from a CONQUEROR'S grasp,
"Far greater than THIS NORMAN!

* The Saxon line was restored through the sister of Atheling.

† A daughter of Harold married Waldimir of Russia. This part was written when the Emperor of Russia was in England.

" Spare, oh God!—

" My burning brain!"—Then, with a shriek, she fell
Insensible upon the SAXON'S GRAVE!
They bore her from the fane—and Godwin said,
" Peace, peace be with her, now and evermore!"
He, taking Marcus by the hand, " Yet, here
" Thou shalt behold—behold, from day to day,
" This HONOUR'D GRAVE! But where in the great world
" Shall be thy place of rest, poor Adela?"—
" Oh! God be ever with her!" Marcus cried,
" With her, and you, my brothers! Here we part,
" Never to meet again—whate'er your fate,
" I shall remember with a brother's love,
" And pray for you! but all my spirit rests
" In other worlds—in worlds, oh! not like THIS!
" Ye may return to this sad scene when I
" Am dust and ashes; ye may yet return—
" And visit this sad spot; perhaps when age
" Or grief has brought such change of heart as now
" I feel, then shall you look upon MY grave—

"And shed one tear for HIM, whose latest pray'r
"Will be—Oh! bless you! bless MY SISTER, Lord!"
Then Adela, with lifted look compos'd,—
"FATHER, IT IS PERFORM'D,—the duty vow'd
"When we return'd to this devoted land,
"The last sad duty of a daughter's love!—
"And now I go in peace—go to a world
"Of sorrow, conscious that a father's voice
"Speaks to my soul, and that thine eye, oh God,
"Whate'er the fortunes of our future days,
"Is o'er us. THOU, DIRECT OUR ONWARD ROAD!"
O'er the LAST SAXON'S GRAVE, old Osgood rais'd
His hands, and pray'd—

"FATHER OF HEAV'N AND EARTH!
"All is beneath thine eye! 'tis ours to bend
"In silence. Children of misfortune, lov'd,
"Rever'd—children of HIM who rais'd these roofs,
"No home is found for YOU in this sad land;
"And none, perhaps, may know the spot, or shed
"A tear upon the earth where ye are laid!"
So saying, on their heads he plac'd his hands,

And bless'd them all—but, after pause, rejoin'd,
" 'Tis dangerous lingering here—the fire-ey'd Lynx
" Would lap your blood!—Westward, beyond the Lea,
" There is a cell, where ye may rest to-night."

The portal open'd—on the battlements
The moonlight shone—silent and beautiful!
Before them lay their path through the wide world—
The nightingales were singing as they pass'd;
And, looking back upon the glimm'ring tow'rs,
THEY, led by Ailric, and with thoughts on Heav'n,
Through the lone forest held their pensive way!

CONCLUSION.

WILLIAM, on his imperial throne at York
Is seated, clad in steel, all but his face,
From casque to spur. His brow yet wears a frown,
And his eyes show the unextinguish'd fire
Of stedfast vengeance, as his inmost heart
Yet labour'd, like the ocean after storm.

His sword unsheath'd appears, which none beside
Can wield; his sable beard, full and diffus'd,
Below the casque is spread; the lion ramps
Upon his mailed breast, engrail'd with gold.
Behind him stand his barons, in dark file
Rang'd, and each feature hid beneath the helms;
Spears, with escutcheon'd banners on their points,
Above their heads are rais'd. Though all alike
Are cas'd in armour, know ye not that knight
Who next, behind the King, seems more intent
To listen, and a loftier stature bears?
'Tis bold Montgomerie; and he who kneels
Before the seat, his armour, all with gules,
Checker'd, and checker'd his small banneret,
Is Lord Fitz-alain. William holds a scroll
In his right hand, and to Fitz-alain speaks:
" All these, the forfeited domains and land
" Of Edwin and of Morcar, traitor-lords,

* The picture is taken from an original, preserved in Drake, in which William and his barons are thus represented. He is shown in the act of presenting his nephew Alain with the forfeited lands of Earl Edwin.

" From Ely to the banks of Trent, I give
" To thee and thine!"
Fitzalain lowly knelt,
And kiss'd his non-hand, then slow arose,
Whilst all the Barons shouted, " LIVE THE KING!"

This is thy song, WILLIAM THE CONQUEROR,
The tale of HAROLD'S children, and THE GRAVE
OF THE LAST SAXON! The huge fortress frowns
Still on the Thames, where WILLIAM'S banner wav'd,
Though centuries, year after year, have pass'd,
As the stream flows for ever at its feet—
HAROLD, thy bones are scatter'd, and the tomb
That held them, where the Isea's lorn wave delay'd*,
Is seen no more; and the high fane, that heard
The ELEESON pealing for thy soul,
A fragment stands, and none will know the spot
Where those, whom thou didst love, in dust repose,
Thy CHILDREN!——But the tale may not be vain,

* " Waltham" is, literally, the Ham in the Wold.

If haply it awake one dutcous thought
Of filial tenderness.
That day of blood
Is pass'd, like a dark spectre! but it speaks
Ev'n to the kingdoms of the earth—
" Behold
" The hand of God! from that dark day of blood,
" When Vengeance triumph'd, and the curfew knoll'd,
" England, thy proud majestic policy
" Slowly arose! through centuries of shade
" The pile august of British liberty
" Tower'd, till behold it stand in clearer light
" Illustrious. At its base fell Tyranny
" Gnashes his teeth, and drops the broken sword;
" Whilst Freedom, Justice, to the cloudless skies
" Uplift their radiant forms, and Fame aloft
" Sounds o'er the subject seas, from East to West,
" From North to South, her trumpet—'ENGLAND, LIVE!
" 'AND RULE, TILL WAVES AND WORLDS SHALL BE NO MORE!' "

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NOTES.

Page 6, line 16.

Every trace has vanish'd.

Part of the abbey remains, but I believe there is no trace of the tomb; it was of gray marble. That part of the abbey where it lay is entirely destroyed.

Page 7, line 12.

Where Lea.

The river Lea, near which the abbey called Waltham Holy Cross was founded.

Page 8, line 16.

Marcus.

I have taken the liberty, for the sake of euphony, to alter the name of Harold's third son, from Magnus to Marcus.

There is a quaint epitaph in Speed, describing him as having been buried in a convent at Lewes. I have so far adhered to historical tradition, as to represent him under the character and in the habit of a religious order. The abbey, founded by his father, seemed more appropriate than a convent or cell at Lewes. The wife of Harold is not introduced at the funeral, as she had fled to a convent.

Page 9, line 12.

Leofrine.

Altered from the real name, for the same cause as I have given a variation to the name of Magnus. I have taken the liberty also of representing the "religious" at Waltham Abbey as Monks; though, in fact, they were "Canons."

Page 10, line 11.

Spurn-head.

Spurn-head, at the entrance of the Humber.

Page 11, line 14.

Like the two brothers famed in ancient song.

Fratres Helenæ.

HORACE.

Page 12, line 9.

Ravenspur.

This town and castle are now vanished; but the name is well known in English history. It is uncertain whether it was built since the Conquest, but there can be no doubt there was a castle at the entrance of the Humber; and as the name was familiar, and the antiquity of the place acknowledged, I consider myself at liberty to retain the name.

Page 27, line 3.

Red portentous comet.

A comet appeared at the time of Harold's coronation.

Page 27, line 10.

Fierce Norwegian.

Hardrada, of Norway, had invaded England just before

the arrival of William. Harold defeated him with immense slaughter in the north, and was called from thence to a more desperate and fatal struggle.

Page 30, line 17.

A hundred Norman knights.

William and the Normans were solicitous to pay every mark of respect to the remains of the late king.

Page 33, line 14.

Panope.

——— On the level brine,
Sleek PANOPE, with all her sisters play'd.

MILTON.

Page 34, line 3.

The very swallows.

I have placed, according to the best accounts, the taking of York at the fall of the year.

William prepared his army, and took the field in the spring; and the whole country, north of the Humber to the Tyne, was entirely laid waste and desolated by fire, famine, and the sword. See Turner's excellent History of England, and of the Anglo-Saxons.

Page 36, line 17.

But o'er her child, a frantic mother.

Only one family was saved in the massacre of the Normans at York. The name is Malet, or Mallet. I have made this historical circumstance illustrative of the milder, but no less brave, character of Edmund, and introduced the episode for the sake of "relief," as many other descriptions, which I need not point out.

Page 42, line 6.

First, within the Tower.

Whether it is a matter of fact or not, that the Tower was finished in this year, I am justified in assuming it poetically, and it is at least historically credible.

Page 43, line 19.

London's sole Tow'r might laugh their strength to scorn.

"Our Castle's strength will laugh a siege to scorn."

Macbeth.

Page 44, line 7.

Yet calm his countenance.

William, with all his sternness, is described by contemporary historians as having a remarkable complacent smile, and seems to have been by nature bold, benevolent, and superstitious. I have endeavoured to sketch his portrait, as it appears from a comparison of the writers of the period.

ILLUSTRATIONS FROM SPEED.

"This victory thus obtained Duke William wholly ascribed vnto God, and by way of a solemne supplication or procession, gaue him the thankes; and pitching for that night his pauilion among the bodies of the dead, the next day returned to Hastings, there to consult vpon his great and most prosperously begun enterprise, giuing first commandement for the buriall of his slain soulfliers.

'But Morcar and Edwin, the vnfortunate Queenes Brethren, by night escaping the battaile, came vnto London, where, with the rest of the Peeres, they beganne to lay the foundation of some fresh hopes; posting thence their messengers to raise a new supply, and to comfort the English (who, through all the Land, were stricken into a fearefull astonishment with this vnexpected newes) from a despairing feare, shewing the chance of Warre to be mutable, their number many and Captaines sufficient to try another field. Alfred, Archbishop of Yorke, there present, and President of the Assembly, stoutly and prudently gaue his counsell forthwith to consecrate and crowne young Edgar Atheling (the true heire) for their King, to whom consented likewise both the sea-Captaines and the Londoners. But the Earles of Yorkeshire and Cheshire, Edwin and Morcar (whom this fearefull state of their country could not disswade from disloyaltie and ambition), plotting secretly to get the crown themselues, hindred that wise and noble designe. In which, while the sorrowfull Queene, their sister, was conueyed to Westchester, where, without state or title of a Queene, she led a solitary and quiet life.

" The Mother of the slaine King did not so well moderate her womanly passions as to receiue either comfort or counsell of her friends: the dead body of her sonne shee greatly desired, and to that end sent to the Conquerour two sage brethren of his Abbey at Waltham, who had accompanied him in his vnfortunate expedition: Their names (as I finde them recorded in an olde manuscript) were Osegod and Ailric, whose message to the Conquerour, not without abundance of teares and feare, is there set downe in the tenour as followeth:

"'Noble Duke; and ere long to be a most great and mightie King, we thy most humble seruants, destitute of all comfort (as we would we were also of life) are come to thee as sent from our brethren, whom this dead King hath placed in the Monastery of Waltham, to attend the issue of this late dreadfull battaile (wherein God fauouring thy quarrell, he is now taken away and dead, which was our greatest comforter, and by whose onely bountifull goodnesse we were relieued and maintained, whom hee had placed to serue God in that Church.) Wherefore wee most humbly request the (now our dread Lord) by that gracious fauour which the Lord of Lords hath shewed vnto thee, and for the reliefe of their soules, who in this quarrell haue ended their dayes, that it may be lawfull for vs by thy good leaue safely to take and carry away with vs the dead body of the King, the Founder and builder of our Church and Monasterie; as also the bodies of such others as whom for the reuerence of him and for his sake desired also to be buried with vs, that the state of our Church by their helpe strengthened, may be the stronger, and indure the firmer.' With whose so humble a request, and abundant teares, the victorious and worthy Duke moued, answered:

"'Your King (said he) vnmindfull of his faith, although he haue for the present endured the worthy punishment of his fault, yet hath he not therefore deserued to want the honour of a Sepulchre or to lie vnburied: were it but that he dyed a King, howsoeuer he came by the Kingdom, my purpose is, for the reuerence of him and for the health of them who hauing left their wiues and possessions haue here in my quarrel lost their liues, to build here a Church and a monastery with an hundred Monkes in it, to pray for them for euer, and in the same Church to bury your King aboue the rest, with all ho-

nour vnto so great a Prince, and for his sake to endow the same with great reuenewes.'

"With which his courteous speech and promises, the two religious fathers, comforted and encouraged, again replied:

"'Not so, noble Duke, but grant this thy servants most humble request, that we may, for God by the leaue, receiue the dead body of our Founder, and to bury it in the place which himself in his life time appointed, that wee, cheered with the presence of his body, may thereof take comfort, and that his Tombe may be vnto our successors a perpetual monument of his remembrance.'

"The Duke, as he was of disposition gracious, and inclined to mercy, forthwith granted their desires, whereupon they drew out stores of gold to present him in way of gratulation, which he not only vtterly refused, but also offered them plenty to supply whatsoeuer should be needfull for the pompe of his funerall, as also for their costs in trauaile to and fro, giuing strait commandments that none of his souldiers should persume to molest them in this businesse or in their returne. Then went they in haste to the quarry of the dead, but by no meanes could find the body of the King; for the countenances of all men greatly alter by death, but being maimed and imbrued with bloud, they are not known to be the men they were. As for his other regall ornaments which might haue shewed him for their King, his dead corps was despoyled of them, either through the greedy desire of prey (as the manner of the field is) or to be the first bringer of such happy news, in hope of a princely reward, vpon which purpose many times the body is both mangled and dismembred, and

so was this King after his death by a base souldier gasht and hackt into the legge, whom Duke William rewarded for so vnsuldier like a deed, casheiring him for euer out of his wages and warres. So that Harold, lying stript, wounded, bemangled, and besmeared in his bloud, could not be founde nor knowne till they sent for a woman named Editha (for her passing beatie surnamed Swan shals, that is, Swans-necke), whom hee entertained in secret loue before he was King, who by some secret marks of his body, to her well knowne, found him out, and then put into a coffine, was by diuers of the Norman Nobilitie honourably brought vnto the place afterward called Battle Bridge, where it was met by the nobles of England, and, so conueyed to Waltham, was there solemnly and with great lamentation of his mother, royally interred, with this rude Epitaph*, well beseeming the time, though not the person.

"Goodwine, the eldest son of the King Harold, being growne to some ripenesse of years in y^e^ life of his Father, after his death and ouerthrow by the Conquerour, took his brother with him and flew ouer into Ireland, from whence he returned and landed in Somersetshire, slew Edmoth (a Baron sometimes of his Fathers) that encountered him, and taking great preyes in Deuonshire and Cornwell, and departed till the next yeare. When comeing again he fought with Beorn and Earle of Cornwall, and after retired into Ireland, and thence went into Denmarke to King Swayn, his Cosen German, where he spent the rest of his life.

"Edmund, the second sonne to King Harold, went with

* For this epitaph, see Speed.

his brother into Ireland, returned with him into England, and was at the slaughter and ouerthrow of Edmoth and his power in Sommesetshire, at the spoyles committed in Cornwall and Devonshire, at the conflict with the cornish Earle Beorn, passed, repassed with him in all his voyages, inuasions, and warres, by sea and by land, in England and Ireland; and at the last departed with him from Ireland to Denmarke, tooke part with him of all plasure and calamitie whatsoeuer, and attending and depending wholly upon him, liued and died with him in that country.

"Magnus, the third sonne of the King Harold, went with his brothers into Ireland, and returned with them the first time into England, and is neuer after that mentioned amongst them, nor elsewhere, vnlesse (as some coniecture) he be that Magnus, who, seeing the mutability of humane affaires, became an Anchoret, whose epitaph, pointing to his Danish originall, the learned Clarenciaux discouered in a little desolate Church at Lewes, in Sussex, where, in the gaping chinks of an arch in the wall, in a rude and ouer worne character, certain old imperfect verses were found."

A daughter, whose name is not known, left England with her brothers, and sought refuge with them in Denmark.

Speed quotes Saxo Grammaticus, who says, "She afterwards married Waldemar, King of Russia." To this daughter I have given the name and character in the poem.

THE END.

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